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ABSTRACT

A description is given of the cooperation between the Las Cruces Teacher Center (New Mexico) and New Mexico State University. The university's college of teacher education and the teacher center are now working together to meet the needs of preservice and inservice teachers. The university has interacted with the teacher center at various preservice and inservice levels. These have included: (1) graduate courses; (2) recertification courses; (3) individual faculty presentations; and (4) center director interaction with preservice undergraduate students from the university. The director of the center has attempted to reach as many undergraduate students as possible. Frequent presentations are made by the teacher center for undergraduates in early childhood classes, elementary and secondary student teaching, and all four levels of the university's cooperative education program. An exchange program with British teacher centers has also been initiated with participation by both teacher center and university faculty. Joint planning efforts are made between the university and the teacher center, and the center director feels free to request and to suggest potential courses or offerings. University faculty are interested in teaching at the center and frequently request to do so. (JD)

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Rx for Inservice Success:

Cooperative Efforts Between University and Teacher Center

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RX FOR INSERVICE SUCCESS:

COOPERATIVE EFFORTS BETWEEN UNIVERSITY AND TEACHER CENTER

Introduction

Today's educational scene reflects declining school enrollments with the accompanying phenomena of fewer public school job openings for teachers. Burrello and Walton (1980) discussed these trends and the changing attitudes of teachers toward professional development now oriented toward life-long learning, the aspects of accountability, and mandated changes in educational institutions, as circumstances leading to major shifts in inservice education.

Cruickshank, Lorish and Thompson (1979), in a review of the literature, identified present shifts in inservice education. Included are three which seem particularly apropos to the Las Cruces Teacher Center - New Mexico State University model presented here. The three trends included: 1) a blurring of the line between preservice and inservice education; 2) a shift from simple inservice programs to more complex programs covering a broad range of materials and aimed at more diverse audiences; and 3) a change from singular control by other public schools or institutions of higher education to collaborative administrative mechanisms (Burrello and Walton, 1980).

Demographic Factors.

Located in southwestern New Mexico's Mesilla Valley, Las Cruces is a city of approximately 69,000. Hispanics, American Indians, Blacks, and Anglos have all contributed to a stimulating multicultural setting. There

are numerous small and large farms along the Rio Grande that grow cotton, pecans, chili, and lettuce. New Mexico State University is one of the main employers in the valley with L'Eggs Products (women's hosiery) the only industry in the immediate area.

The Las Cruces School District has 17 elementary schools, grades K-6; four junior high schools, grades 7-9; two high schools and two alternative high school programs. The school population is approximately 15,000 with 885 teachers and several hundred support staff (Devaney, 1978).

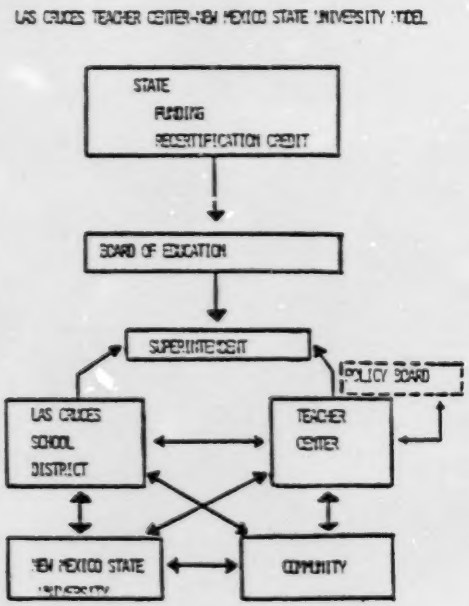
To the north of the district is White Sands Missile Range, a United States government test facility, which brings "federal impact" money into the school district. Thirty-five miles to the south is the Mexican border. Bilingual programs (more than fifty percent of Las Cruces citizens speak both English and Spanish), Head Start programs, and migrant programs also contribute federal funds to the district.

New Mexico State University (NMSU) is the state's oldest public institution of higher learning, founded in 1888. It embodies the finest in the land grant traditions with an extensive public service program. NMSU's College of Education has 900 undergraduate students enrolled in teacher preparation programs. 545 of these students are elementary majors and there are three times as many women as men. Five departments offer graduate degrees which include the M.A., M.A.T., Ed.S., Ed.D. and Ph.D. One-fourth of the entire graduate enrollment is in the College of Education; approximately 400 students.

The Las Cruces Teacher Center is located approximately two miles from the university campus. The Center, operated on a day-to-day basis by employed staff, is governed by a policy board. This board consists of

elected individuals from local schools, public school administration, and from the local university. The College of Education and the Teacher Center are now cooperating their attempts to meet the needs of preservice and inservice teachers. This has not always been true. The model described in this paper reflects a tentative, cautious movement toward complementary activities with an increasing degree of trustful attitudes among all concerned. It appears that everyone has gained, and has much more to gain, as the relationship continues to develop and grow. According to Bell and Peightel (1976) major problems in improving teacher centered inservice are the lack of trust between various sections of the educational community and the lack of communication between educational personnel at the various levels of service. It is felt that the Las Cruces Teacher Center and the NMSU College of Education have made great strides in overcoming these two hurdles.

LCTC - NMSU Model.



Three major concerns prompted the development of this unique model:

1) the need to establish a cooperative relationship between the university and the schools in order to facilitate inservice education programs.

2) the prevailing present day atmosphere suggesting a need to move classes from university settings to the "real world of teaching."

3) the need to bridge the gap between theory and practice through innovative inservice courses.

The model utilizes resource people from the university, schools, and community to provide innovative preservice-inservice training for teachers. These three catchment areas (the university, the schools, and the community) provide a variety of expertise and differing points of view necessary to implement the goals and objectives of the model.

Brief Overview of Teacher Centers.

Teacher centers have as many personalities and faces as the people who operate them and utilize their services. The concept of teacher centers is relatively new in the United States having only surfaced in the past twelve years. Its roots can be easily traced to the United Kingdom where more than 200 teacher centers provide services to that island's teachers. Since 1978, federal legislation in the United States has provided a surge of interest, resulting in more than 150 centers, federally funded, dotting the entire country. Because of budget cuts, however, many of those centers have been forced to close at the end of funding, or are hanging on with tiny threads of support from some benevolent school district. In addition to federally supported centers, there are centers funded by grants and foundations, others where volunteers manage to keep a center operational by charging fees for materials and offerings, and a few that are district

funded. All centers have a common thread in that they are attempting to meet the needs as articulated by their constituency.

Most often the teacher center is a place where teachers come together to share ideas and expertise, get help from one another, and advice and support from those who can be trusted. Teachers have the option of attending center activities. Unlike so many other inservice activities, participants attend because they have a desire to do so. There is no penalty for one who does not understand or who is questioning or trying something new or different. Teachers are encouraged to state their needs and request assistance. The staff will then attempt to respond or to locate others who may be of help to them. Very often the center is responsible for getting together two or more people who have similar needs or interests. Other services that are provided by teacher centers may include: workshops; courses (often university as well as recertification); materials collections consisting of commercial as well as teacher-designed items; a professional library; collections of consumables to develop teacher-made materials; audio-visual equipment; laminators; and a recycle center.

Common to most teacher centers is the governing board, sometimes referred to as a "policy board" or "decision board." In many centers these are elected individuals from schools or groups of schools, administrative representatives, and, when appropriate, representatives from the local universities. Policies are established by the board while actual day-to-day operations are conducted by the employed staff. The policy board plays a key role in the center. If a center is to be truly "of, for, and by teachers," it is important that this group understands the charge and functions accordingly, listening carefully to the voices

of their constituency.

The policy board of the Las Cruces Center has been intimately involved from the Center's inception to the present. Duties beyond policy-making have included: operating the Center during off-beat hours; collecting resources; serving as communication links between the community and the Center; and, frequently, serving as the staff's support team.

Las Cruces Teacher Center.

The Las Cruces Teacher Center is unusual because it was initiated by a group of teachers who perceived the need for such a center. In February 1977, the group talked to the superintendent, Las Cruces Public Schools. The superintendent encouraged the group to pursue the idea. He suggested a meeting of at least 40 people to discuss the potential center. This meeting attended by 200 teachers, administrators, university professors, parents, and merchants was the beginning of the local center. The school administration agreed to fund the center in the amount of $15,000, excluding salaries, rent/utilities, and other services that the district would provide. Initially, two positions were announced, a director and secretary/aide. The policy board was elected and planning for the Las Cruces Teacher Center began. The location of the new Center was in an old and dilapidated laundry building. The policy board, friends, and staff wielded paint brushes, saws, and hammers and began the task of turning an eyesore into a warm and comfortable environment. Donations of all kinds appeared and what couldn't be put to immediate use became the foundation of a recycle center.

The original staff increased to three persons shortly after the Center's opening that fall. Hundreds of persons utilized the rather limited services that were available to teachers that first year. By the end of that year,

the Center was forced to move because of limited space. Once again the policy board arose to the occasion, helping the staff to move the volumes of materials that had accumulated during the first year. A former elementary school became the new home of the Center.

The Center has a flexible schedule. Different combinations of hours have been tried to meet the needs of the majority of users. Currently it is open from 9 to 6 o'clock each week day. Most classroom teachers have little time for anything but teaching during the week, so the Center is also open on Saturdays and any evening by request. The Center is fully staffed during regular working hours. An aide or the coordinator are there during the extra hours and available for consultation. Occasionally a member of the policy board will work as staff in order to keep the Center open a few extra hours. In addition, university students, student teachers, and community people may also use the center.

The Teachers' Center is a storehouse and materials are sold at a nominal cost. Individual schools reimburse teachers for the materials they purchase for classroom use. Teachers still pay for many items out of their own pockets. A library of more than 3,000 titles, including periodicals, offering information on individualized instruction, special education, and open classroom techniques is also available in the Center.

The first phase of the Center gave teachers a chance to make their own materials. However, the Teachers' Center can provide more opportunities for professional development. Requests for assistance in other areas are currently being received.

Today, additional rooms in the building have been pressed into service

to house the expanded recycle center, cardboard carpentry center, photography center (including darkroom), professional library, and three presentation rooms. The budget has expanded to over $40,000 in direct monies. The staff consists of four full-time positions including a director, secondary resource person, audio-visual specialist and secretary/bookkeeper. Part of the budget is used to obtain the services of artists, scientists and other skilled persons when there is a demand for their expertise. The offerings of the center have, also, increased.

New Mexico State University

NMSU was involved in a number of roles during the development of the Las Cruces Teacher Center. Faculty served on the policy board of the Center. As early as the second semester of the Center's operation graduate courses were offered at the Teachers' Center by University faculty. Additionally, numerous shorter workshops and presentations have been made. A total of 387 Las Cruces teachers have participated in these joint endeavors.

The University has interacted with the Teacher Center at various preservice and inservice levels. These have included: 1) graduate courses; 2) recertification courses; 3) individual faculty presentations; 4) Center Director interaction with undergraduate students; and 5) special series emphases.

Graduate courses have included work in the areas of: reading (content fields, diagnosis); curriculum (curriculum integration in the elementary school); individualizing instruction in the secondary classroom; elementary science; classroom communication models; and teachers as writers. A total of 235 graduate students have participated.

Recertification courses have covered such diversified areas as: creative planning; individualization of instruction; igniting creative potential; Southwest Culture; discovering the Santa Fe Opera in the schools; Indians of the Southwest; and Distant Drums, Feathers and Hogans. A total of 116 participants have been involved in these courses.

The director of the Center has attempted to reach as many undergraduates students as possible. Frequent Teacher Center presentations to students in early childhood classes, elementary and secondary student teachers, and to all four levels of the University's Cooperative Education Program students are given. More than 380 undergraduate students have interacted in this fashion and have been introduced to and/or utilized the Teacher Center's facilities.

Individual University faculty have presented in the areas of: how to recognize and deal with stress; prevention and remediation of learning disabilities; and multicultural art activities. One hundred-one students have participated in these workshops.

Additionally, special series foci have been concerned with: gifted programs/materials for the secondary student; child abuse; art; parenting workshops; Supersaturdays for Kids; and special holiday themes such as Christmas. Six hundred-forty participants have engaged in these activities.

More than 1,450 preservice and inservice participants have been involved with University-Teacher Center-related activities. It is anticipated that the University-Teacher Center interaction will continue. Courses to be offered at the Center by the University in Spring 1982, include: Early Childhood; Bilingual Education; and Reading.

Las Cruces Teacher Exchange with Durham, England

During the summer of 1979, the Teachers' Center director was invited

to participate in an exchange with wardens from British teacher centres. This was sponsored by the Teachers' Center Project, funded through the National Institute of Education (NIE) to the National Education Association. In the following spring of 1980, her British counterpart spent two full weeks in Las Cruces as a part of the exchange. A number of persons who visited the Teacher Center during this visit expressed interest in a similar exchange for teachers. The idea was thoroughly explored with university, local school administration and teachers. In the Summer 1981, the Las Cruces Teachers' Center director visited England and through previous contacts, established an exchange which would be offered in Summer 1982 and Spring 1983. The model was one that was based on the exchange between Wayne State University and teachers in the London area. Both teacher center and university personnel were vitally involved in the exchange.

The Las Cruces Center and NMSU followed the Wayne State Model in developing their exchange program. An announcement was sent to all schools in the district. Interested participants were asked to attend a meeting that would give information and attempt to answer questions. Interested applicants were asked to write a letter stating why they wished to participate, what they hoped to gain from the experience, and what they felt they could offer in return. Letters were received by the Teachers' Center and then forwarded to the Centre in England for their information. The final selection will be determined by the British.

Twenty-five teachers have made application for the exchange. Three University faculty and the Teachers' Center Director will also participate. Enthusiasm and interest are high. The Teachers' Center staff made all of

the arrangements for the participants including travel and information about passports. Jointly, the University and Teacher Center staff have developed a syllabus for three courses that will be offered to participants in the exchange. Each participant will enroll in the University courses. The courses offered in conjunction with the Durham, England Exchange will include three graduate level classes for a total of nine hours credit. These are:

> Education 501/601, 3 hours, Spring 1982. Current Trends and Issues in International/Comparative Education: United Kingdom.
> Socioeconomic, political, cultural characteristics undergirding the educational structure and practices in the United Kingdom. Procedures for developing and implementing observation and interaction with a school setting in a culture other than one's own. Prerequisite: Written consent from the instructors.
>
> Education 502/605, 3 hours, Summer 1982. Field Study/Analysis Curriculum and Instruction: United Kingdom.
> Field inquiry and experience in local school settings in the United Kingdom. Prerequisite: Education 501 or Education 601.
>
> Education 503/698, 3 hours, Fall 1982. Advanced Seminar in Current Trends and Issues in International/Comparative Education: United Kingdom.
> Analysis and synthesis of the educational-cultural experiences in the United Kingdom Comparative Study of: curriculum and school programs, teaching methods and materials, teacher-student relationships, home-community relationships, and socio-cultural structures. Prerequisite: Education 501 and 502 or Education 601 and 605.

Not only will the exchange provide each participant with a comparative view of British education but, more importantly, an opportunity for insight into another culture and another language. The actual exchange will be for three weeks. The Americans will live with their British counterparts, attend and participate in school functions, visit other schools in the area, and participate in family life in Britain.

Assessment of the Programs

Biemer (1978) observed that classes in Teacher Centers have resulted

in changes in teacher activities and work locations for the university teacher trainer. This has been true for the faculty at New Mexico State University. Lucas (1978) suggested that preservice sets the stage for the success or failure of inservice programs. The heavy emphasis New Mexico State University places upon exposing undergraduates to the Teacher Center programs is based on this concept. Whether the students are simply introduced to the Teacher Center, participate individually (or in selected Teacher Center programs), they are, nevertheless, exposed to the value of professional growth development through at least one medium.

Burrello and Walton (1980) indicated that there are various motivations for professional development on the part of the inservice teacher. These may be for personal reasons, for professional renewal, for career development or for improving professional performance. Whatever their reasons, teachers seem to want and need inservice which provides: 1) programs for individual needs and alternative learning environments; 2) informal, non-threatening inservice environments; 3) improvement of basic skills; and 4) exploration of new materials, media, and methods (Bell and Peightel, 1976). The collaborative efforts of the Las Cruces Teacher Center and New Mexico State University seem to be responding to these motivations and needs.

The general assessment data seem to bear out these assumptions. Unlike the majority of college classes that many teachers have had to take, teachers have expressed feelings such as "relevant, pertinent to immediate application," "directed to the practice of current educational trends," "directed to practitioners, not just preservice," and "appreciation

for professors practicing what they preach."

What has made these classes and joint efforts between the University and public schools at the Teacher Center significantly different from attending a regular night course at the University? The most important is that planning has been preceded with an unusual amount of articulation among the university deans, professors, department heads and the Teacher Center staff. The ambience of these meetings has been pleasant and professional. More importantly, the goal of really trying to meet the needs of potential students is kept in mind. These courses have received high evaluations. Many presentations have been repeated a number of times at the request of participants.

The Center director feels free to request as well as suggest potential courses or offerings. University faculty are interested in teaching at the Center and are requesting to do so.

Edelfelt and Orvell (1978) reported that teacher centers can influence the way in which school districts or colleges of education offer field extension work and degrees. To this end, it is imperative that the Las Cruces Teacher Center and New Mexico State University continue the evaluation efforts already begun. It is important to plan, operate and evaluate all the time. Edelfeldt and Orvel (1978) advised that evaluation is an obligation. Numerous evalution and feedback instruments were used to assess the cooperative activities of the Las Cruces Teacher Center and New Mexico State University. These instruments ranged from simple picture format, through more sophisticated appraisal of instructor performance, feedback instruments, to the standard Teacher Center form and the official University's University Classroom Description Questionnaire (UCDQ) form.

To date, all seem to support favorable reaction to University Teacher Center collaboration through faculty presentations and classes.

In one graduate class of 28 students, using the appraisal of instructor's performance, more than 75 to 100 percent of the students felt: 1) instructor showed confidence in students, 100%; 2) students felt free to respond, 82%; 3) student ideas were sought and used in classroom planning, 75%; 4) instructor and students were responsible for achieving instructional goals, 79%; and 5) communication was candid, 79%.

On a feedback instrument involving 85 participants in an assertiveness workshop: 100% felt the objectives were made clear; 87% felt the activities were appropriate to the workshop and the materials were relevant to them; 99% felt the suggestions were practical and applicable to their needs; and 95% were interested in participating in further workshops.

On another feedback instrument which evaluted a multicultural class of 17 students, it was found that: 100% learned something they didn't know before; 91% gained a new insight; 83% verified a belief or concept they had held; 89% felt they could apply what they had learned to interacting with culturally different students; 83% felt they could apply what they had learned to developing cultural awareness in their classroom; and 89% felt they could apply what they had learned to influencing others concerning multicultural education.

The standard Teacher Center forms and the University UCDQ forms from various other classes all tend to support the positive aspects of the Teacher Center-University cooperative efforts. The Teacher Center concept is one kind of inservice education, but it should not be thought of as a panacea or that it will satisfy all needs of all teachers. It cannot be

forgotten that graduate education is an important mode of inservice education. The important concept of teacher centering is that it has a direct relationship with individual teachers and, first and foremost, addresses those teachers' needs.

Royer, Shanker and Sandefur (1979), noted that a teacher sense of efficacy is a key variable in efforts to change schools. Inservice programs need to build on this sense of effectiveness. The Las Cruces Teacher Center and New Mexico State University, by meeting the needs of teachers through collaborative inservice programs, seem to be addressing that key variable in today's world.

Conclusions

Scheduling of hours is still a priority problem. Theft and extended borrowing have been a constant, increasing problem.. There has been considerable need to spend time and effort in opening communication and developing trust among the various educational sectors. More extensive needs assessment needs to be done on a consistent and formalized basis. At present a needs assessment system is operating sporadically, and is of an informal nature. More salient and usable information must be gathered to respond to teacher's needs both in terms of preservice and inservice educators.

The successes have been significant. The cooperative efforts from all educational sectors have been encouraging. The accesses and alternatives to various activities, programs, and faculty at all levels have been heartening. The gains have far outweighed the problems. If the Las Cruces Teacher Center and New Mexico State University can continue to cooperatively develop programs and activities that will not only enhance

the inservice teacher's sense of efficacy but also help the preservice teacher develop positive attitudes toward professional growth and development, their efforts will continue to be rewarded with success. Everyone involved has much to gain; however, in the final analysis, it is the public school student who will benefit most.

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